DOCUMENTARY film news

INCORPORATING DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

MAY 1948 ONE SHILLING

Preamble . . .

'Impact on Film' is a name that will stick, perhaps because of its very awkwardness in these times of slick and meaningless titles.

Book 1 in the series is to be published shortly. It is not proposed here to present a list of well-known names: however, it can be pointed out that the essay by Dilys Powell, in which this critic surveys the nationality of films, and the specially contributed and illustrated article, 'The Script Comes to Life', on cartoons by the Halas-Batchelor team, are vital to every aspect of film polemic.

I am not of the opinion that **'IMPACT ON FILM'** publications are bringing out 'the film books to end all film books', but I think that their merit will be obvious to the discerning, and not a little entertaining to those whose interest is of a more leisurely kind. J. Clifford King's visit to a Saturday Morning Children's Film Club, and the 'Portrait of Margaret Lockwood' by Marguerite Bruce, deliver the sting and the honey with persuasive zest.

Peter Probyn has designed our cover. John Tarr has designed our lay-out.
With 32 pages, all Art, at 2/-, **'IMPACT ON FILM'** is worth watching for.

Paul Sheridan NAPIER HOUSE, 24 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, WC1

REALIST FILM UNIT

FROM OUR INDEX OF PRODUCTIONS

UNDER C: CHILDREN:—*CHILDREN AT SCHOOL (B C G A), CHILDREN GROWING UP WITH OTHER PEOPLE (C O I), CHILDREN LEARN'NG BY EXPERIENCE (C O I), YOUR CHILDREN AND YOU (C O I), YOUR CHILDREN'S EARS (M O I), YOUR CHILDREN'S EYES (M O I), YOUR CHILDREN'S MEALS (C O I), YOUR CHILDREN'S SLEEP (C O I), YOUR CHILDREN'S TEETH (M O I).*

All these films are available from the Central Film Library, except Children at School (1937) which is now out of circulation.

9 GREAT CHAPEL STREET W I

GERRARD 1958 MEMBER OF THE FEDERATION OF DOCUMENTARY FILM UNITS

SIGHT and SOUND

A cultural Quarterly

MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN

appraising educational
and
entertainment values

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DOCUMENTARY film news

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The cover still for this month is from a new film *Steps of the Ballet*, which will shortly be released by Crown Film Unit

CONTENTS

Editorial 49
Notes of the Month 50
German Feature Films
Basil Wright 51
Animated Films
Norman McLaren 52
Germany Year Nought 53
New Documentary Films 54
COI Report 55
Indian Cinema
K. Ahmad Abbas 56
Normandy Diary
Chapter I 57
Competition Result 58
Film Classification
James Harris 59
Correspondence 60

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ROBERTO ROSSELLINI

NEARLY twenty years ago the concept of putting real people and events on the screens of this country began to show its first practical results. The first documentary films opened the eyes of British cinema audiences to, among other things, the artistic possibilities of a medium which until then had been concerned principally with various versions of what the butler saw.

Many of those who witnessed these early interpretations of reality felt that at last the British cinema was beginning to find its proper material in the life and work, the hopes, fears and struggles of the common man. In the rugged, friendly, unfamiliar faces which the camera then scanned for the first time, there lay the strength and humanity from which the British cinema, it seemed reasonable to hope, might develop a power to move men's hearts as they have rarely been moved by any of the older arts. Here was a new medium of expression, popular in the most literal sense, which could worthily interpret the life which throbbed under the roof-crusts of our cities and in the quietness of our countryside.

Since those early years the British documenary film has gained an importance in our national life which has fully justified the soaring dreams of its founding fathers. On a scale which few could have imagined twenty years ago the moving picture has been turned to the service of the people, not only of this country, but of the whole Commonwealth, and it is certain that this progress has not reached its peak. The advance has not, however, been equally swift in all directions. Partly owing to the influence of the war, of all the potentialittes which were latent in the initial documentary idea, the one which has developed most fully is that of public information. But the capacity to depict the life of the individual, ordinary man is the one which has progressed least from its rudimentary state, for although many films have been made in which all the participants have been men and women in the street, they have generally been treated as symbols of the mass, as puppets whose attitudes and gestures emphasize or prove a social point. Seldom has there been an attempt to portray the single, idiosyncratic individual who, with millions of other unique individuals, is the raw material of the mass. It is a matter of approach; the course followed with every justification by documentary film-makers until now has been to take a social problem and illustrate its effects and solution with the help of representative individuals. The alternative, equally justifiable, is to start with the human being in the round, his face, his gestures, his thoughts and the inflections of his voice, and set him in his surroundings, which include not only the pattern of his carpet and the view from his bedroom window but also the social situation in which he lives.

This trend of British documentary towards the treatment of institutions rather than people has spread wherever the documentary influence has spread, and the portrayal of the individual has been left to the feature and entertainment film-makers who, by and large, still seem only able to contemplate the perverted aspects of the present and the romantic aspects of the past. To find any proper screen study of mankind it is necessary to turn to the countries of Europe where people have been compelled to reconsider their approach to many subjects besides that of the cinema. The recent visit to London of Sr Roberto Rossellini was more than a date in the cinema's social calendar. It was the visit of a man who, by his will and inspiration, has probably come closer than any other active director to portraying our time in terms of its living participants. His most recent film, *Germania Anno Zero*, which has un-

(*Continued at foot of page* 50, *col.* 1)

NOTES OF THE MONTH

The British Film Institute

THE Report of the Government Committee of Inquiry into the British Film Institute has been issued after four months of evidence-taking (HM Stationery Office. 4*d*.). It redefines the Institute's objects as follows:

(*a*) to encourage the development of the art of the film, to promote its use as a record of contemporary life and manners and to foster public appreciation and study of it from these points of view;
(*b*) to explore and promote new or extended uses of the film;
(*c*) to encourage, support and serve other bodies working in the same field.

Its recommendations, in brief, are that the Institute should concentrate on building up the National Film Library and establishing its own cinema, providing a first-class information service and setting up a regional organization to develop local film appreciation and activity. A rough estimate of the finance necessary is given as £100,000 to cover annual expenditure which is over three times the present grant, and £30,000 to meet capital expenditure.

Clarification of the Institute's purposes and some expansion of its work are therefore the main upshot of the inquiry. The proposal that the Institute should act as a central servicing agency for other organizations (giving grants, providing meeting places, projection facilities, secretarial help, etc.) is also valuable. Important, too, is the recommendation that the Governors should in future be appointed by the Government as individuals.

The great omission is a really inspiring lead to the Institute. The main proposals do little to break new ground. The initiative still remains with the other organizations which have grown up—film societies, specialist film users and film makers—to see that the Institute becomes the real centre and focus of all film interests and activities which it ought always to have been.

*

Education Foundation for Visual Aids

THE GOVERNORS of the Educational Foundation for Visual Aids have now appointed the new Director of the Foundation.

Dr Harrison is at present an Assistant Education Officer of Surrey County Council, in whose employ he has been since 1945, when he was appointed as Assistant Education Officer for Further Education.

We are told that Dr Harrison has had considerable experience of the use of visual aids to education both in the Services and in civilian teaching. From 1931-45 he used visual aids almost continuously in all types of education. In 1938, while on a Carnegie Institute research scholarship in science, he visited many American schools, taking a particular interest in the use they made of visual aids. He has produced, and assisted in the production of, slides, film-strips and 16 mm films, and since 1945 he has been responsible for advising the Surrey Education Committee on the purchase of all types of visual aid equipment.

*

Documentary in Parliament

'CHARLEY', the new Halas-Batchelor creation, to whom our readers have already been introduced, has already got himself into Parliament. On May 13th there was a debate in the House of Commons about Government publicity services, with special reference to the Central Office of Information. COI films were mentioned when Mr Marlowe (MP for Brighton) questioned the 'vast sums' spent by COI and complained that few of the films were ever seen by the people. Mr Marlowe seemed perturbed that £30,000 was being allocated for six cartoons featuring 'Charley', to be made with the direct object of explaining to the people the workings and advantages of the new Government Acts—Housing, Health Bill, National Insurance, etc.

The artist who created 'Charley' has described him as 'a middle-aged bloke, going bald, with a streak of optimism'. Mr Marlowe wished to know which of the gentlemen on the Treasury Bench was the model for this caricature!

We would respectfully advise Mr Marlowe and other honourable members to see one or two of the 'Charley' cartoons before making such sweeping criticisms—they might find them instructive, and they will certainly find them amusing. As for the general public not viewing them—well, they will be theatrically distributed *and* available very shortly from the Central Film Library.

Let us see more and not less of this type of film. The parable is still the easiest method of explanation—and 'Charley' can tell the story of our social changes better than any number of White Papers or pronouncements in the Press.

*

Wot! No Money

WE SENT our bright young man along to the British Council to attend the meeting which was arranged between Roberto Rossellini and the Press, when the Italian film director arrived in this country at the beginning of May. Unfortunately, however, Signor Rossellini was indisposed, and a member of the British Council staff undertook to answer questions. Our representative, not daring to return entirely empty-handed to the editorial staff, and noticing that in the hand-out issued beforehand by the British Council special reference was made to Signor Rossellini's interest in documentary films in Britain, inquired whether this might be taken to indicate a possibility of his making a similar type of film in Italy. The young lady behind the desk replied without hesitation: 'Oh, he always uses the documentary technique. Why, he hardly spends a penny.' The young man was later found wandering down Regent Street with a dazed expression on his face.

(*Editorial contd.*)

fortunately so far only been seen privately in this country, shows what tremendous forces may be released by this fresh approach.

Sr Rossellini's method is to put aside all the pretentious paraphernalia of conventional film-making. With the most limited technical means, and using for the most part real people in their real surroundings, he builds a picture of Berlin which shows, not how a stricken city is governed, fed, clothed and decontaminated, but how the people who remain there live and feel. He achieves, so to speak, a deeper reality towards which it is time our own realist film-makers turned their thoughts.

There are, of course, many ways in which film-making can be approached, and it would be unreasonable to suggest that the style which has carried British documentary so far towards the goal originally set for it should be abandoned, but it would be equally unreasonable to insist on dogmatic uniformity. There has recently been much criticism of the predicant dullness of many documentary films. Surely one of the surest methods of bringing our screens back to life is to turn our minds to the study of the ordinary man.

Film in Europe

German Feature Films

by

Basil Wright

FILM makers in Germany are working under conditions of extreme difficulty. There are virtually no studios, apparatus is short. It is, on the whole, remarkable what has been achieved, apart from the French Zone, where it appears that no production has so far been undertaken. In the other three zones would-be producers must obtain a licence to make films from the occupation authorities, and must also obtain approval for each script before they go into production. The main laboratories (outside the Russian Zone) are in the British and US sectors of Berlin, in the American Zone at Munich, and in the British Zone at Göttingen. Plans for new laboratories in the British Zone are under discussion.

Ingenuity

In the British Zone, incredible ingenuity has been exercised by German producers in converting all sorts of buildings—such as inns, village halls, barracks, ruined school-buildings—into reasonably efficient studios. But there is a natural tendency to script films for the maximum amount of location shooting, at least until the new stages at Göttingen are ready for use.

Ideologically, the eight films I saw during a short visit to the British Zone seemed to me to reflect firstly the confusion of the non-Nazi German mentality today, and secondly, the influence of the respective occupying authorities. Without entering into too dangerous a generalization, it could be said that the mental and psychological attitude behind some of the films is best summed up by those two untranslatable German words—*Weltschmertz* and *Schadenfreude*, which, in their post-war German setting, combine into a curious sort of self-pity which non-Germans find it difficult to appreciate or understand.

The problem of the German producer today is to find a way of getting something positive out of the prevailing mood of depression, either directly, or by turning their attention elsewhere (escapism). The tendency of the cinema-going public is to prefer the latter method to the former, which they call 'Trümmer'—(rubble)—films.

Russian Zone

The best of the rubble-films is also one of the earliest—*Mörder Sind Unter Uns* (Murderers are among us) now showing in London. Not only is it a fine piece of film-making, but it also puts forward a positive viewpoint in terms of the rehabilitation of the principal character, who returns to active community service after a period of disillusionment. This film was made in the Russian Zone, and is very much better—ideologically—than two others from that zone, *Irgendwo in Berlin* (Everywhere in Berlin) and *Ehe im Schatten* (Marriage in the Shadows). *Irgenwo in Berlin* begins well, but relapses into profound sentimentality, the last ten minutes being exclusively devoted to a tear-jerking deathbed scene of a too-too angelic small boy. (There is an interesting comparison here with Rossellini's *Germany Year Nought*, which however is not eligible for discussion here, since it is not in fact a German film.) *Ehe im Schatten* deals with the plight of a Jewish-Gentile marriage under the Nazi regime, and is based on the actual story of the famous actor Gottschalk, who was married to a Jewess. It is a well-made and very moving film, but its conclusion, a double-suicide, is hardly encouraging.

American Zone

Not unexpectedly, films made in the American Zone show a tendency to follow Hollywood patterns, both in story and in production technique. *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen* (Between Yesterday and Today) is a sort of *Grand Hotel* subject, ingeniously constructed in double flashbacks, beautifully acted and thoroughly gripping throughout. It deals with the return to Germany of a refugee from the Nazis after the war, and what he finds. Unfortunately, the story is so neat, so contrived, so smooth at the edges, that the emotional and psychological punches are weakened, and what could have been truly dramatic becomes not much more than enjoyable entertainment. Nevertheless, it is something of an achievement, particularly in comparison with another American Zone film—*Uber uns Die Himmel* (Heaven above us). This stars Germany's most permanently popular star, who survived the Nazi period intact, appearing in films without Fascist implications, Hans Albers. It was directed by von Barcy. (The same team made *Baron Munchausen* to celebrate the twenty-fifth birthday of UFA in 1943.) But what a shocking story. It's about a man who becomes King of the Black Market in order to get funds to restore the sight of his war-blinded son. Which having been achieved, he considers the error of his ways and returns to honesty. The Californian breezes blow too obviously.

British Zone

Of all the zones the British has so far achieved the highest output. During 1948 a minimum of 12 new features is expected, as opposed to eight during 1947. Fortunate, too, has been the presence of Helmut Käutner, a really first-class film director, several of whose productions were banned by Goebbels. Some may remember his colour film, *Grosse Freiheit* (also known as *La Paloma*), which was shown privately by the MOI during the war. Käutner has given much help and encouragement to a new group of young film makers under the leadership of Rolf Mayer. This organization is known as the *Junge Film Union*, and is working in a converted dance-hall in the country near Hamburg.

The tendency of producers in the British Zone—if any tendency can be clearly discerned—is to try to combine a positive approach to reconstruction with escapist or semi-escapist techniques. The first film of this type, *Menschen im Gottes Hand* (People in God's Hands), is a sincere but often too naïve study of post-war problems. Nevertheless, its intentions, both in idea and technique, command considerable respect, and it is also notable in depending not on established performers but mainly on a young and comparatively inexperienced cast which acquits itself more than promisingly. The film is also a remarkable example of how enthusiasm and improvisation can surmount the most appalling lack of facilities.

Two Others

In complete contrast is a film called *Denn Finden Wir uns Wieder Derein*, which deals inefficiently and mawkishly with the adventures of a group of Hitler *Jugend* who make their way back to Berlin to defend it against the invaders, but are disillusioned by the cowardice and defection of their leaders. The intention of the film is good, but with the exception of a few brief sequences it is incoherent and rather boring.

Film Ohne Titel (Film without a Title)—script and supervision by Käutner—is, on the other hand, the liveliest and most enjoyable of all the German films I have seen. It takes the shape of a script conference between all the members of a production unit, one of whom is played by Käutner himself and another by Willi Fritsch. Starting from a given boy and girl situation, they discuss the various ways it might have arisen and might be worked out. Each member of the unit describes the story from his own point of view, and this gives opportunities for several amusing parodies of film styles. At the end, the boy and girl tell the real story, on which the unit comes to a unanimous decision—its too ordinary, there's certainly no film in it. *Film Ohne Titel* certainly deserves early distribution in this country.

FOR SALE

A few copies of the following publications are offered for sale. Some of them will be of much interest to our readers. Offers should be sent to the Editor.

Cinema Quarterly: Autumn 1932
Spring 1933
Spring 1934

Canadian News

Animated Films

by

Norman McLaren

DFN has asked me to write a short article on the conception and execution of some of the animated films I have been making for the National Film Board of Canada.

Their production method differs radically from the usual one for animated films, and this largely conditions the final result.

On the visual side their making is a one-man operation from start to finish. I have tried to preserve in my relationship to the film, the same closeness and intimacy that exists between a painter and his canvas. This is rather difficult, for in the one case only a stick of wood with a tuft of camel hair intervenes between the maker and the finished result, and in the other, an elaborate series of optical, chemical and mechanical processes, which become a perfect breeding ground for lack of intimacy, frustrations, ill feeling and hostility between the artist and his finished work.

And so my militant philosophy is this: to make with a brush on canvas is a simple and direct delight—to make with a movie should be the same.

Examples

To illustrate the effect of this philosophy on my technique I will give details of different solutions.

One group of films made for the Film Board in the earlier part of the war publicizing the War Savings Campaign were all made by a hand-drawn-camera-less method; they were *Dollar Dance*, *Five for Four*, *V for Victory* and *Hen Hop*. As *Hen Hop* is the purest example, I will speak about it.

In it the camera, shooting, developing of original negative were completely short circuited. In one operation, which is the drawing directly on to 35 mm. clear machine leader with an ordinary pen nib and indian ink, a clean jump was made from the ideas in my head to the images on what would normally be called the developed negative. Because these ideas were never thought out in precise detail until the moment of drawing, and because, when drawing, I had a chart of exact footages of the music both beside me and in my head, the equivalents of SCRIPTING, DRAWING, ANIMATING, SHOOTING, DEVELOPING OF NEGATIVE, POSITIVE CUTTING and NEGATIVE CUTTING were all done in one operation. If a mistake was made, a small amount of water (I use saliva) on cloth would wash the offending images off the frame, and drawing could continue as before. The rectification with one swipe of the damp cloth affected all the traditional processes from script through to negative cutting.

Summary

To summarize the technical processes involved:

Music recorded first.

Music track run on a movieola and each note, phrase and sentence marked with grease pencil.

Track put on a frame counter and the notes measured cumulatively from zero at start.

Measurements are put against the notes on a dope sheet, which is usually a simplified musical score, and, by subtraction, the length of each note in terms of frames is written in.

The grease pencilled sound track is run through a two-way winder, along with a roll of clear machine leader, called a 'dummy'. The notes are copied and identified with indian ink on the dummy.

The final drawing is done with the aid of an apparatus whose purpose is to hold the film in place, move it on from frame to frame and provide a means of registration from frame to frame. It is actually an adapted camera gate with claw mechanism and an optical system that reflects the image of the frame just drawn on to the frame about to be drawn.

The dummy is threaded through this apparatus. On top of it and riding along with it is threaded another track of clear machine leader for doing the final drawing on. With a bottle of ink, pen and dope sheet at hand drawing can begin.

All drawing is done in natural sequence, starting at the first frame of the film and working straight through to the last.

When finished, the drawn track goes into the lab for a couple of prints; one for a checking print to sync up with the sound track, the other for a master for release printing.

If colour release is desired, various kinds of dupes are made from this master and assembled in parallel to act as the separation negatives for the particular colour process used.

Interesting Points

The above may sound rather like a failure to realize my philosophy of the simple, hand-made movie. However, it should be noted that the real creative job of it is all concentrated into one unified and uninterrupted session (in our painter-canvas parallel the rest of the jobs are equivalent to stretching and sizing the canvas, setting out the palette, varnishing and framing).

There are several other points perhaps worth mentioning:

Beginning at the first frame and working through to the end in natural sequence is a procedure which seldom happens in film making, even in animated shorts. I found it valuable for it allowed improvisation and had a direct bearing on both the detailed and total continuity.

The small size of the frame made it difficult to draw complex images; cinematically this is a healthy limitation for it forced me to make my point solely by the action rather than by relying on static characteristics.

The most effortless and easiest thing to produce by this hand-drawn method is extreme mobility; the most difficult, and almost impossible is staticity. This is the opposite of most other animation techniques where the static image is the easiest footage to obtain, and the mobile the most difficult. With the standard animation technique, one breathes life into a static world; with hand-drawn technique, one slows down, to observable speed, a world of frantic mobility. (When beginners draw footage by hand and the result is projected at normal speed, the image-flow is so fast that it gives the impression of looking at thought, if thought were visible.)

The image must needs be linear; tone value and light and shade cannot be used as they fluctuate too much from frame to frame. For certain types of film this is a severe limitation.

When the National Film Board needed publicity shorts during the war, the above hand-drawn linear technique served quite well, but when the need for animated films on our French-Canadian folk songs came up it was hardly adequate, particularly for the more poetic and slow songs. I had, therefore, to think of maintaining my intimacy with the celluloid in some other way. I felt the need for using chiaroscuro and slowness, and solved the problem thus.

Doing a painting

In doing oil paintings myself, and in watching other painters at their canvases, it often seemed to me that the evolution or change that many a painting went through from its virgin state to (in my own case) its soiled and battered conclusion, was more interesting than the conclusion itself. Why not, therefore, consciously switch the focus-point of all the effort from the end condition and spread it over the whole process? In other words, do a painting, but put the emphasis upon the *doing* rather than the *painting*—on the *process* rather than the *end-product*.

And so for *Poulette Grise*, I stuck a bit of cardboard about 18 in. by 24 in. upon a wall, placed rigidly in front of it a tripod and camera loaded with colour film. To avoid reflection and waiting-to-dry trouble, I used chalks and pastel rather than paint.

The picture then grew in the normal way that any still painting grows, being evolved from moment to moment, and each stage being very dependent on the stage before it. About every quarter of an hour the evolution was recorded on the film mainly by short, contiguous dissolves. For three weeks the surface of this one bit of cardboard metamorphosed itself in and out of a series of henly images, and at the end of it, all I had was one much worn bit of cardboard with an unimpressive chalk drawing on it, and 400 ft. of exposed film in the camera. In a sense the film was the by-product of doing a painting.

Of course the sound track has to be marked up first and the dope sheet made out in much the same way as for the hand-drawn technique, but once again the creative part of the job happened in one and only one concentrated binge, unhampered by technical headaches and frustrations. Also of importance was the fact that here again the movement evolved in its natural sequence,

This new film directed by Roberto Rossellini has not yet been released in London. It deals, as its name suggests, with life in Berlin the year after the war.

Germany Year Nought

A new Rossellini Film

THIS IS the third Rossellini film since he burst on the world outside Italy after the war. It is not such a good film as either *Open City* or *Paisa*, but all the same it has more real movie in it than anything else one is likely to see in a long time. Rossellini has got right inside the physical and psychological Berlin of today; that is, he has completely understood the feeling of living in a very slow, dark, and hopeless nightmare of mental and bodily misery. *Germany Year Nought*, which he has dedicated to the memory of his own son, tells the story of a small boy who is led by circumstances, and by the general human conditions around him, to poison his ailing father and commit suicide himself—a plot at first sight so grotesquely melodramatic as to be almost comic, but, when fitted to the uncompromising and imaginatively presented realism of the Berlin landscape, both convincing and moving. With the exception of the old father, who is an actor, all the characters are ordinary Berliners (the boy was found working in a circus), and, apart from one or two interiors, the film was shot on location.

Technically, *Germany Year Nought* reveals once again Rossellini's unusual and often revolutionary style. Dialogue sequences are shot in constricted spaces, with both the camera and the characters moving restlessly in varying focal planes. Moments of great significance are pointed by the sudden withdrawal of the camera to extreme long shot—there is a moment when the boy hears an organ playing in a roofless and ruined church, and the camera suddenly shows us the scene in a high angle perspective, which recalls a painting by Chirico. But all these technical points arise, invariably, from Rossellini's conception of what the film must say. Take for example the portable gramophone playing a recording of Hitler's broadcast on the defence of Berlin, while the Tommies and the Yanks wander listlessly around the Reichschancellery, and the ruins stretch mile after mile, masking one knows not how many skeletons or how many living dead. This is not just a clever or striking sound trick; it is a sequence integral to the plot and motivation of the film.

What one misses is the different sympathy of observation which could have come had the director seen Berlin *as an Italian*; it is no doubt one of Rossellini's greatest assets that he is able to enter so deeply into the feelings and outlook of those around him, but here he has identified himself so completely that it might be a film made by a German. This has happened, I suggest, for two perfectly valid reasons; firstly, no film director worth his salt could fail to reflect in his shooting the architectural and human atmosphere of Berlin (which is unforgettably horrible); and secondly, Rossellini has, with a passion that shines clear and lucid from the screen, concentrated on expressing, through the boy Edmund, the whole pity and terror of that martyred innocence which, with the atom bomb, has become the hall-mark of our modern world. It is perhaps significant that the finest part of the film is the finale, where the boy is utterly alone; we follow him, aimlessly wandering, through the city's gritty and repulsive dusk, observe, almost with horror, the traces of simple, childish interests and childish play which break across his misery, and feel, with the anonymous passer-by who sees him fall to his death, that it is, obscurely but none the less certainly, our fault. Then the camera pans up as a shabby tram trundles past, and carries us off with it on the final fade-out . . .

B. W.

Continued from previous page

and as a result I had a chance to improvise everything at the moment of shooting.

As this particular technique lent itself more readily to creating visual *change* rather than to *action* (side to side, and to and fro displacement of image on the screen) I intentionally avoided the use of *action*, partly because it suited the theme, and partly out of curiosity to see if *change* in itself could be a strong enough cinematic factor to sustain interest.

The technique also invited me to take chiaroscuro out of its usual role as a dead element in the decor of animated films, and put it to work as the foremost factor with a life of its own. In this I hope that perhaps I am on the way to bridging the gap that has always existed between painting proper and the animated film.

Sometimes the demands of a theme dictated a technique which was remote from my stick-with-camel-hair philosophy, as in the case of the Chant Populaire, *C'est L'Aviron*. My only hope, then, was to get as close to the technical mechanism as possible and thoroughly exploit the intimacy—in this case with the zoom stand, shutter and wind-back possibilities of an animation camera. But, on the whole, themes incompatible with the camel-hair approach were avoided.

To sum up, the conception and execution of most of my work for the National Film Board has probably depended on four things:

(1) Attempting to keep at a minimum the technical mechanism standing between my conception and the finished work.
(2) Handling personally the mechanisms that do remain, in as intimate a way as a painter his painting, or a violinist his violin.
(3) Making the very limitations of these mechanisms, when brought in touch with the theme, the growing point for visual ideas.
(4) Making sure of a chance for improvising at the moment of shooting or drawing.

A scene from Greenpark's film for British Overseas Airways Corporation
The name is *Three Dawns to Sydney*; a review will follow in June

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

★ Cartoon of the Month

HERE is a project, a series of cartoons intended to introduce problems of the day to the public in a popular way, which deserves full approval. It needed imagination to sponsor such a series and it needed an acute sense of proportion to entrust these films to the expert hands of John Halas and Joy Batchelor. In both respects, the COI are to be congratulated. To have succeeded in producing two films (it is yet the start of the series), which will not only be an asset to any cinema programme because of their entertainment value, but which will at the same time encourage constructive and informed discussion, is something of an achievement—and it will certainly be its own reward.

The first of these cartoons, *New Town*, which gives an excellent idea of the outlines of town-planning in a most human and delightful manner, has already been reviewed in these pages: that it is, if anything, the better of the two viewed purely as a cartoon does not reduce the second qualitatively to second place, because the latter, *Your Very Good Health*, a discussion of the proposed National Health scheme, on the other hand, gives rather more information about its subject. Altogether, therefore, there is very little to choose between them. Both combine good humour and liveliness, qualities lacking so often as to give them almost a scarcity value.

In each film, the central figure is an engaging character called Charlie, whose shock-headed independence is sturdy and buoyant without being obstructive. He is cleverly chosen and created, because he avoids the insipidity of a Mr Average Man yet retains certain desirable charaoteristics which, if they do not incline members of the audience to identify themselves with him, will at least endear him to them. We are glad to see that in the interval between the showing of the two films Charlie has not been idle, for he is now able to introduce to his public a wife and child. The infant, although reminiscent of the typical cartoon baby, now and then shows enough flashes of his unique parental origin to offset this earlier impression.

Your Very Good Health answers some of the main questions which the ordinary man and woman ask about the forthcoming scheme. It is an introduction to the discussion of what is still regarded in some quarters as a controversial issue. It is, in fact, such a brilliant introduction to this subject that it may well have the effect of lulling its sponsors into thinking that no further effort in film is needed. Here lurks the danger, because the more successful this series proves to be in fostering public interest, the more urgent it becomes to follow up these kingfisher flights of fancy with detailed foreground and background films. And such films can, with some imagination, be made about subjects which are, like those of the first two films, still in the blue-print stage.

Down to the Sea. Made by Greenpark. *Producer:* Paul Fletcher. *Director:* Humphrey Swingler. *Camera:* George Still and Peter Hennessey. *Editor*: Alex Camp. *Assistant Directors*: John Elliot and Peter Plaskitt. *Music*: Guy Warrack.

Apparently an inquiry for shipping space in a Rio office will set every shipyard working from Birkenhead to Belfast. This film, which is informative and factual, ably demonstrates the part that ships play in our existence. The first essential for an economic recovery is a lively export trade and, as a corollary, ships to carry our goods. The object of the film is to show the shipbuilding industry at work, from the time when the designer is experimenting with wax models in a pond, until a new ship sets out on its maiden voyage to meet that need in Rio.

As a purely objective record of why and how ships are built the film is successful, but one feels that more information regarding the lives of those who build and sail them, even to the exclusion of the handshaking of people who launch them, would add to the value of this otherwise interesting film.

Crisis in Italy. March of Time. Vol. 13. No. 8.

This film illustrates the present political and economic situation in Italy, with emphasis on the potential power of the Communist Party. The Communists are represented as being active and influential in Trade Unions and Local Government. In the agricultural south they have, by agitating for the break-up of large estates, secured a large measure of support from Italy's farming population, to account for one-third of the party's membership. It is also made clear that the Americans are in Trieste. Aid is available from the United States to offset the economic plight in which the country finds itself. Can this aid be administered to ensure a strengthening of resistance to Communist political action?

During the palmy days of isolation, when Europe was nobody's business, and America had only herself to take care of, March of Time could usually be relied upon to perform an accurate and unbiased job of pictorial journalism. Pictorial accuracy may still be found, but isolation cannot be had in this, the American century. Time Marches On.

From 'Moving Millions', a new Crown Film

COI Report

being a list of Central Office of Information releases January-June 1948

Title	Production Unit	Details of Distribution	Notes
Answer Four Questions	Crown Film Unit	NT. Primarily intended for showing to children of school leaving age	A recruiting film for the Civil Service. (Produced for the Ministry of Labour)
Any Time to Spare	Geoffrey Plumbley Productions	Limited Theatrical Distribution	Recruiting film for the Territorial Army and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force
Charley's March of Time	Halas and Batchelor Production	Monthly release for May. Will also be available from CFL in July	The third of the series of coloured cartoons featuring 'Charley'. This film deals with the new National Insurance Act. (Produced for the Ministry of National Insurance)
Crete—Part 2	Editorial Film Productions	Primarily for distribution in schools, but also available from CFL	Three of a series of four films on Crete, describing the history of the island. (Produced for the Ministry of Education)
Crete—Part 3	Editorial Film Productions		
Crete—Part 4	Editorial Film Productions		
Down to the Sea	Greenpark Productions	Theatrical Distribution probable. Final details not available at time of going to press	A film dealing with the high qualities of British shipbuilding
Falklands	Editorial Film Productions	NT	The work of survey in the Antarctic. (Produced for the Colonial Office)
Furnival and Son	Crown Film Unit	Theatrical distribution probable. Final details not available at time of going to press.	A portrait of Sheffield. (Produced for the Board of Trade)
Here's Health	Data Production	Theatrical distribution probable. Final details not available at time of going to press	An explanation of the National Health Bill to the General Public. (Produced for the Ministry of Health)
History of Writing	Films of Fact Ltd. Production	Part of a Visual Unit for distribution to schools	To show the background of writing from the earliest time up to the present day. (Produced for the Ministry of Education)
Home Service	Cecil Musk Production	Theatrical distribution probable. Final details not available at time of going to press	A picture of the British Radio and Television Industry. (Produced for the Board of Trade)
How to Make Chutneys and Sauces	Films of Great Britain Ltd	Central Film Library	An instructional film for housewives. (Produced for the Ministry of Food)
How to Make Pickles	Films of Great Britain Ltd	Central Film Library	An instructional film for housewives. (Produced for the Ministry of Food)
How to Use the Telephone	Public Relationship Films	For distribution to Government Departments	An instructional film for Civil Servants. (Produced for the Treasury)
Miners' Weekend	Crown Film Unit	NT	A picture of the way in which miners spend their spare time at weekends
Minesweeping	Crown Film Unit	NT	An Instructional film, produced for the Admiralty
Moving Millions	Crown Film Unit	Theatrical distribution probable. Final details not available at time of going to press	A picture of London's transport facilities. (Made for the London Transport Executive at the request of the Foreign Office)
Pop Goes the Weasel	Crown Film Unit	NT	A popular explanation of how the money raised by taxation is spent. (Produced for the Treasury)
Precise Measurement for Engineers	Data Film Production	NT	This film shows the importance of precise measurement in all phases of modern industrial engineering and the ultimate responsibility of the National Physical Laboratory for maintaining accuracy in standards of measurement. (Produced for the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research)
Report on Industrial Scotland	Crown Film Unit	Monthly Release for February	The regearing of Scotland's industrial machine to new needs. (Produced for the Board of Trade)
Surface Dressing with Tar	A Verity Films Production	NT	Instructional film on the preparation of road surfaces. (Produced by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research)
Telephone Cable Plumbing	Films of Great Britain Ltd	Limited Non-Theatrical distribution	Training film for GPO Engineers. (Produced for GPO)
They Gave Him the Works	Greenpark	Monthly Release for June	To discuss what can help to make a happier factory life. (Produced for the Ministry of Labour)
This is Britain No. 22	A Merlin Film Production	NT	'This is Britain' is a series of magazine films. This issue contains two items: (1) Aptitude Tests in the Royal Air Force (2) Changing a Wavelength
This is Britain No. 23	A Merlin Film Production	NT	'This is Britain' is a series of magazine films. This issue contains three items: (1) Buses in Boxes (2) Wood Engravings (3) North Sea Cable
This is Britain, No. 24	A Merlin Film Production	T	'This is Britain' is a series of magazine films. This issue contains three items: (1) The Whirling Arm (2) Gunpowder Plot (3) Lighthouse Shop
This is Britain, No. 25	A Merlin Film Production	T	'This is Britain' is a series of magazine films. This issue contains three items: (1) The Fastest Tyres on Earth (2) School for Signalmen (3) Plaster Plus
A Thousand Million a Year	Anglo-Scottish	Commercially distributed by 20th Century Fox	An account of the work done by Customs and Excise. (Produced for Customs and Excise Department)
Town Rats	Crown Film Unit	NT	An instructional film on rat destruction for local authorities, health committees and pest operatives. (Produced for Ministry of Food)
Trial by Weather	World Wide Pictures	Final details not available at time of going to press	The Agricultural Disaster of 1947, and the measures taken to save the harvest. (Produced for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries)
Vegetable Dishes	Films of Great Britain Ltd	NT	One of a series of films on basic cooking. (Produced for the Ministry of Food)
Voices of Malaya	Crown Film Unit	Commercial distribution by MGM	An account of life in Malaya today. (Produced for the Colonial Office)
Your Children's Sleep	Realist Film Unit	Commercial distribution by Piccadilly Cinematograph Film Productions. Also available from Central Film Library.	One of a series of films on the care of children. This film shows parents how to get their children to sleep properly. (Produced for the Ministry of Health)
Your Health	Editorial Films	Theatrical distribution in Scotland	An explanation of the way in which the National Health Service will work in Scotland
Your Very Good Health	Halas and Batchelor Production	Monthly release for April. Available from Central Film Library at the end of May	The second of the series of coloured cartoons featuring 'Charley'. This film explains the workings of the National Health Service

Indian Cinema:

KEY TO UNDERSTANDING

by

K. Ahmad Abbas

ONE of the first things a foreigner notices about Indian films is that they are too long—though no Indian film has yet beaten the record of *Gone With The Wind* in this respect, and since the war-time shortage of raw stock, there is a general tendency to reduce the footage, supported by a ruling of the Indian Motion Picture Producers Association fixing 12,000 feet maximum for the product of its members. On the other hand, both in Britain and in Hollywood films of quite inordinate length are being produced. It is true, however, that the tempo of story development in an Indian film is slower than in its counterpart from Hollywood. So, to a foreigner, it seems longer. This criticism applies not only to film making but to a whole way of life. The Indian films are slow because the tempo of Indian life is slow, and as a mirror of this life, they unconsciously and inevitably, tend to acquire this tempo. Indian life is still slow because, artificially arrested by historical and political causes, it is still largely in the feudal stage. The Indian films will acquire the nervous tension and mounting tempo of a Hollywood thriller only when the impact of industrialism has created the same psychological atmosphere in this country as in England and America.

Human Relations

The Indian films are produced for people steeped in traditions of long and patient suffering. Here time stands still and a couple of thousand feet more of a film is a drop in the ocean of eternity. We are a patient people, brought up on religion and literary epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, *Shahanama* and *Easana-i-Azad*. We are used to religious song festivals like *qawwalis* and *kirtans* that go on for the whole night, and are not likely to be bored by a two-hour movie.

For climatic and socio-historic reasons, we are a sentimental people and take human relations not so casually as the sophisticated and blasé characters of the average Hollywood picture. The family tie is still strong in India and the modern youth has yet to fight for and win his or her rights to happiness and freedom as an individual. Having been acquainted with suffering on a mass scale for too long—famines, pestilence, tyrannies, the indignities of foreign rule, the frustrations of too rigid a social system, and violent internal strife—we are perhaps a little morbidly fascinated by tragedy. We have an unhealthy desire to see not only martyrdom but even frustration sublimated on the screen. It is interesting to mention in this connection that, unlike the experience of Hollywood, the Indian movie-producer generally finds films with tragic themes more paying at the box-office than flippant musicals or comedies.

Besides films of religious appeal or those dealing with emotional frustration, social justice and the struggle for freedom and the realization of democratic ideals provide some of the most popular themes to the Indian producers. Sentimental stories sympathetic to the poor, the dispossessed, the Untouchables, and attacking the rich and the powerful, are always popular.

Being people in an historically transitional stage—from medievalism to modernism, from feudalism to industrialism, from foreign rule to freedom—we are, consciously or subconsciously, preoccupied with all sorts of political, social, economic and emotional problems. The problem of caste and untouchability, the problem of widow remarriage, the problem of parental interference with young people's lives and love, the problem of unemployment, famines and the economic ruination of the peasantry; all these and many more have been dealt with by the writers and directors of the Indian screen. Indeed, there is almost not a single popular Indian film which has not had a serious social or emotional subject or theme.

Entertainment

But, shrewd businessmen as they are, the Indian producers have learnt to mix this serious content of the picture with 'entertainment'. They know the people are starved of romance and glamour in their personal lives. So they have supplied these ingredients in plenty in their films, invariably at the cost of realism and integrity. Box-office analysis reveals that, barring an occasional cycle of boy-meets-girl films, it is the triple combination of sentimental appeal, contemporary social relevance of theme, and good 'catchy' songs, which provides the formula of success. Of these, the songs perhaps are the most important—as otherwise average films like *Khazanchi* (1940), a plagiarization of *The Way of All Flesh*, and *Rattan* (1945), a variation on the frustrated love theme, became hits only on the strength of their popular songs.

Religion

The Indians are perhaps the most (and also perhaps the last) religious people in the world. The early films, therefore, had religious or mythological themes. Since then some of the best and the greatest of our movie hits have been in this category. Films based on the lives of popular saints have been most successful and it is interesting to observe a progressive humanitarian sub-motif being introduced in these stories of the Men of God. This has been partly due to the fact that many a saint in India (as doubtless elsewhere—the most eminent example being Jesus of Nazareth) has been a Man of the People, too, but also in response to the latent urge of the people for reinterpretation of religion in terms of humanity. Thus *Tukaram*, an inexpensively produced Marathi film, achieved almost a world record by running continuously for over sixty weeks in Bombay City alone, not merely because of its religious appeal, but because the writer and director had stressed the *human* rather than the *spiritual* qualities of the saint which endeared him to his people in his own times, and to millions, centuries later, through the screen.

As in all countries which have a present fraught with discontent and misery, we in India too have been unduly fascinated by romanticized versions of the 'Glorious Past'. 'Ancient Indian in all its pristine glory' is a frequently used catch-line to advertise these so-called 'costume' films which offer escape from the problems of today into a mood of proud contemplation of the past. Not a single king, queen, hero or knight-errant of history has escaped the attention of the film-producers, and, even today, other qualities being, equal, a spectacular historical film can be more popular than a modern 'social'. But here, too, one can see the tendency to re-interpret the past in terms of the needs of today. Many an historical theme has been used as an allegory on burning contemporary issues like Freedom and Unity. And even in the worst days of strict British censorship, the censors have been powerless to ban anti-imperialist propaganda when presented in the garb of an historical film or even a mythological fantasy. Even ordinary 'stunt thrillers' (Indians counterparts of the Westerns) in which a lot of riding and shooting goes on against the Ruritanian background of political intrigue in an imaginary feudal State, have sentiments of patriotism and democracy worked into their rough and crude drama patterns. An amusing sidelight is provided by the fact that when the British Government forced Indian producers to make war propaganda pictures, anti-imperialist ideas were cleverly presented through officially-passed 'anti-Fascist' and morale-building pictures. To give one example: In a social picture called *Kismat* (1943), a song number was introduced in a stage sequence, with the refrain: *Dur hato, ave duniya walo, Hindustan hamara hai* (Step back, step back, you foreigners—India belongs to us, the Indian). In the context of the war, the Government censors liked it because it seemed good anti-Fascist propaganda, a warning to Germany and Japan. But in the cities and towns and villages, the picturegoers who applauded it meant it to be a warning to the Imperialists to 'Quit India'!

The preponderance of songs in an Indian film has been its most exasperating feature for westerners (and westernized Indians) who are used to expect songs only in musicals, and no songs whatever in all other non-musical films. In India there are no non-musical films. Songs are an inevitable and integral part of every one of the

approximately 200 films in about six languages produced every year. The commercial (and, therefore, primary) reason is that the cinema in India has developed into an 'omnibus entertainment' for millions of uprooted peasants and villagers who have lost their rich tradition of folk-song and folk-dance and found nothing to substitute it in the cities and the towns. We have no operas, ballets or music halls, hardly a stage, to supply the various different forms of entertainment. To most of us, the cinema is all these rolled into one; we expect it to give us music, comedy, tragedy, the vicarious thrills of romance, a taste of beauty and glamour otherwise lacking in our lives. And, shrewd businessmen as they are, the producers have been trying to supply all these in each of their films, with the result that artistic integrity as well as subtlety have constantly to be sacrificed for the sake of 'entertainment'.

Song

Apart from this, however, we should remember that according to the strictly Indian conceptions of romance, the love urge both in its fulfilment and frustration, has been traditionally expressed in song. Again, through religious musical expressions like *kirtans*, *bhajans*, hymns or *qawwalis*, the song is woven into the fabric of Indian life more closely and intimately than in any other country. Where else, for instance, on the eve of a country's freedom would the Constituent Assembly proclaim acquisition of power with patriotic hymns—sung by a lady member of the Constituent Assembly?

Technique

A few final words about technique. Produced for a small market (there are yet no cinemas for the 80 per cent village population of India) and, therefore, on a strictly limited budget, the Indian film cannot have the technical finish and polish of Hollywood or Rank-financed British productions. Also for a long time the Indian screen remained in a crude stage, because of the reluctance of the cultured intelligentsia to associate themselves with uneducated professional entertainers who once monopolized the studios. But things have been steadily changing for the better and today the educational and cultural level of film workers—among artists and technicians as well as writers—is as high as, if not higher than, any other country. The result is a considerable advance both in technique and in the artistic presentation of pictures, though still the artistic and experimental pictures which dare to sacrifice 'entertainment value' for the sake of realism and integrity, are generally doomed to box-office failure. Even if the average product is still of a low standard, a few Indian pictures can easily stand comparison with the best American, British, Russian or French pictures. But they have to be judged as *Indian* films, produced primarily for Indian audiences, reflecting the mood and the temper and the tastes of *Indians*, and not from the standards of commercialized universal appeal of the Hollywood films. And yet because of their peculiar Indianness they provide the sympathetic foreigner with a convenient medium for the study and understanding of the country and its people.

Touring with Film

Normandy Diary

France is separated from England by a mere channel, and yet how little the average Frenchman knows about the British and their way of life. The mission of the British Council in France is to explain British life and thought to French men and women so that they may understand our traditions, our institutions and our characters—also our peculiarities. Films present an admirable means of bringing to foreign audiences a picture of our country and its customs, and this diary, written during a tour of Normany in mid-winter, tells of the trials and tribulations of a British official, who was sent on a films and lecture tour in the Calvados. DFN proposes to print it in serial form during the next few months—here is the first instalment.

The Start

Monday

It was pouring with rain and the snow was beginning to melt. The equipment filled the whole of the back of the Austin car. There was a lot of it, as I thought it wise to take a second projector and accessories in case the first gave out before the end of the tour.

As soon as we left Paris and came on to the auto-route at St Cloud, our troubles began. The rain was melting the snow, but there was a hard surface of frozen snow below the slush. It was difficult to see whether we were on the road or not. The windscreen wiper was not working, and frequent halts were necessary to wipe the window. When it grew light and we were on the main road to Evreux things improved slightly.

At Evreux we had to get petrol. A few kilometres further on the car suddenly stopped. Usual checking of plugs, pumps, carburettor. A few more yards and another sudden stop. Luckily I had remembered being told the coil was placed upside down in this new car. It was soaking wet. We dismounted it and cleaned it, then bound it up with chatterton to preserve it from the slush. This operation took ages, as our fingers were frozen and we kept dropping spanners, nuts and bolts in the snow. The journey to Deauville was fairly smooth after that except for a minor skid and for a few seconds when the car started moving backwards instead of forwards as we climbed a steep hill. Chains would have been a great help on that part of the trip.

Deauville

Nevertheless we arrived in Deauville for lunch. The local representative of the Association France-Grande Bretagne, received us, and we sat down to lunch. A very welcome meal it was.

The cinema where we were to hold our show was on the sea-front at Trouville, next to the Casino. We took about two hours to install the equipment. The local people seemed a little worried when they saw my small projector—they thought it would project too small a picture, and great was their astonishment when I filled the entire screen using a 16 mm film!

We went for a short run along the sea-front because this was the first time that André, the chauffeur, had seen the sea, and he could not take his eyes off it. He kept saying: 'C'est merveilleux!'

The Lecture

At half-past eight we went to the hall where I was to lecture on the 'Renaissance of the English Theatre'. To my horror I saw that there were about 250 children in the front of the hall and some 200 adults behind them. This was no audience for a lecture. At 9 p.m. we started. Mr F—— introduced me and the children giggled and chattered. I launched myself into the subject and for 20 minutes made a noble effort to pierce the barrage of children and to reach the adults at the back of the hall. My voice gave out because the hall is large and the acoustics bad. I appealed to the children to be a little quieter, but it was no use, and I turned the pages of the lecture faster and faster. I was glad when it was over and relieved to be able to start operating the projector.

And the Show

The programme which had been selected was *Coastal Village*, *V-1*, *Steel* and *Desert Victory*. I gave a short resumé of the programme and explained I wanted to show a quiet English village in contrast to a noisy capital subjected to V-1 attacks. *Steel* in technicolor was, as usual, a great success and *Desert Victory* kept the children quiet. They could not in any case make more noise than Monty's guns.

After the show we went back to Mr F——'s house and had a warm drink before retiring to bed. I hope that I shall find other bedrooms in Normandy as warm as this one. The maid has lit a fire.

In spite of the failure of the lecture (which was appreciated by those fortunate enough to be near me on the platform) the show was a success. Even in Trouville there is not much in the form of entertainment—and war films are still in demand. Perhaps it will be different in other towns and villages.

Must go to sleep now as Tilly is a fair distance away and the roads are bad.

(To be continued)

CLASSIFIED ADS

We are now in a position to accept classified advertisements.

Charges for insertion: one guinea for the first three lines, 5/- a line above three.

DFN COMPETITIONS

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 3

ENTRIES FOR this competition (a letter to an aunt explaining how documentary films differ from others) fell roughly into two groups—on the one hand were the serious entries and on the other the facetious. One competitor remarked that it was not likely that James Mason or Rex Harrison would ever be seen in documentary—there wouldn't be enough cash in it for them! Another entry defined documentary as a film which shows 'why the woman next door ran away with someone else's husband'. Well, we asked the Review Board about this and they asked us to find out where they could get hold of such a film—they thought it would make a pleasant interlude for one of their sessions.

All in all, the entries were good—Philip Mackie wins by a long lead with his masterpiece of indecision, and Ruth Partington takes second prize for an excellent entry in serious vein.

FIRST PRIZE

Dear Aunt Tabitha,

Your question is a ~~simple~~ difficult one to answer. You remember, of course, what Grierson said ~~about creative interpretative realism~~ realistic creation of interp on this subject. Well, documentaries are films which deal with real people, and not fictional ones. They ~~have not got~~ may or may not have fictional stories, and they ~~not use~~ may or may not use professional actors. On the whole, though, the easiest way to recognise them is by their ~~sociological content~~ left-wing ~~leotype Government propaganda dialogue lack of dialogue the words "Central Office~~ shortness, though some of them are very long. Anyway, if you see a film non-theatrically it's ~~bound to be~~ probably a documentary, except that of course they do show non-documentaries non-theatrically too. Perhaps the clearest way I can put it is by saying that documentary films are the films that are made by the people who make documentary films. I ~~hope this sets~~ am afraid this will not set your mind at rest on this question.

Your loving nephew,

Philip

P.S. Thank you so much for the woolly ear-warmers. I always wear them at the Scala.

P.P.S. It's a silly word anyway.

SECOND PRIZE

MY DEAR AUNT,

I should like to answer your question about documentary, but must avoid the maze of definition. Read Grierson and Rotha, makers and publicists of documentary film, to get an idea of its purpose and properties.

Then turn to films. Renoir and Vigo, Ford, Rossellini, move us by their creative interpretation of reality, you may object. Yes, but compare their properties — studio sets, professional actors, above all, a story of individual emotional reactions. Whereas documentary uses 'the native actor and the native scene', studies on the spot to find the story of work, instead of constructing sets to suit the story of love. It prefers an economic to an emotional approach, but is none the less human. Unnamed people in an unfamiliar life may move us in *Song of Ceylon*; the illustration of an argument by compilation of images is a triumph in the hands of Rotha.

If art mirrors nature, documentary may be a microscope or a searchlight, turned on the essential universal aspect of humanity. This explanation becomes eulogy! See documentary films, subscribe to *DFN*, and complete this sketchy answer.

Your presumptuous niece,

RUTH

SOUND

AND THE

DOCUMENTARY

FILM

By KEN CAMERON

With a Foreword by CAVALCANTI

'He is undoubtedly well-qualified to speak on sound recording matters relative to documentary production.' —THE CINE TECHNICIAN

'He has provided the textbook on sound which every student and future writer on the cinema will find indispensable.' —SIGHT AND SOUND

With numerous illustrations

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PITMAN

Parker Street Kingsway London WC2

COMPETITION No. 5

THE USUAL prizes of a guinea and half a guinea are offered for *a set of six maxims* for the guidance of the young man (or woman) entering the film world. Entries should reach the Editor before June 15th.

CORRESPONDENCE

SIR: May I express a measure of disappointment at the close-up of Ross MacLean? I disagree with nothing that was said, but I feel—as will others, I am sure—that too much was left unsaid. For instance, there was absolutely no attempt to describe what might be called the glamour of Ross MacLean. Although this was partly redressed by the admirable illustration, the function of that extra-long cigarette holder, whether as stiletto, tickling feather, block-buster, or even peashooter, was not revealed. One must always remember that Ross MacLean is a man of action—and not least, when, with feet on desk, and with the panorama of the Canadian landscape screaming its colours through his office window, he tilts the said holder jauntily, or with menace, at someone or other at the end of a long distance telephone wire.

Personally, when I think of Ross, I like to remember the rapid direct action taken by him on occasions such as that on which his front tyre was blown out by a porcupine in one of the less accessible roads of Quebec late on a Sunday evening. Perhaps such reminiscences are too trivial. Nevertheless, I wish your article had registered more emphatically the dynamism of a man who, rejecting what he felt to be the worst of the English attitude, as he learnt it during his sojourn at Balliol and later in London, started, way back in 1935, to campaign in Canada for that very English thing, a Government Information Service. When others, such as John Grierson, arrived in that vast and seductive concentration of geography and ethnology, they found that the cigarette holder, used this time as a flame-thrower and ploughshare combined, had already eliminated the weeds, and equally had prepared and sown a fertile soil.

Yours etc.,

JOHN SUSSEX

Film Classification

by

James Harris

NON-FICTIONAL films have been classified often enough according to the purpose for which they are known or presumed to have been made. On this system, if three headings are chosen, they are apt to be *Specialized*, *Non-Theatrical*, *Classroom*, and *Public Exhibition*. Another line of classification which can be useful is according to the outlook with which the film is presented, whether it is serious or humorous, intelligent or ill-informed, pedantic or moronic and so forth, the number of possible grades being almost unlimited. There is however another method of division which is simple, fundamental, and of great use in telling a reader what sort of film a particular film is, which reviewers seem to neglect almost entirely; and that is classification according to the way in which the film has been made. Classified this way the films in our field seem to be of only three species, of which any individual films are either pure examples or simple hybrids, and this because there are only three fundamental ways in which non-fictional films get assembled. Let us consider these types in order, calling them the *Cameraman's Film*, the *Narrator's Film* and the *Director's Film*.

The Cameraman's Film

The simplest way in which films are made is that a cameraman is sent out to 'get a good cover' of the subject under consideration, the film he brings back is cut into whatever shape it seems most capable of taking by an editor, someone fits the result with a commentary and the job is done. Newsreels are made this way, and films of expeditions and events whose outcome cannot be safely enough predicted for the writing of scripts beforehand. The method of making sets a stamp or style upon the resulting film which is unmistakable.

The Narrator's Film

The pure-bred Narrator's Film is made by writing a commentary or narration, and then shooting or finding in the film library shots that will illustrate what is being said. Its arch-type is perhaps not a film at all but a lantern-lecture, though the species does contain extremely successful examples. *The River* was a Narrator's Film, and *March of Time* and its imitators tend to have quite as strong a dose of Narrator as of Cameraman.

The Director's Film

The Director's Film is that which is sometimes referred to in Production circles as a 'Properly Scripted Job'. It is the film which has been conceived as a whole, considering sound and picture simultaneously, and then photographed and put together in accordance with the original conception.

It is characterized not merely by thorough integration of sound and picture, but in addition by the use of scenes which the newsreel cameraman is unable to get because they do not exist in nature; in other words, by an approach to Studio technique. This being the most advanced form of Documentary is, naturally enough, the form in which Documentary verges upon something else, Feature Film.

Fitness of the Species

Amongst film technicians the tendency is strong to regard only the Director's Film as a respectable type of production, while the Cameraman's and Narrator's Films are thought of as inferior. As far as the consumer is concerned, the three types are of equal value if they do their jobs equally well, and which type of production should be chosen to expound any particular subject will depend mainly upon the nature of that subject, and also of course, upon the money and talent available. The Cameraman's Film is the right style for topical events whose authenticity is their main appeal, and whose visual interest outweighs any interest that could be added by elaborate film construction. For some instructional subjects in which there is little movement, and in general for subjects which are not very well suited to the film medium, the Narrator's Film is likely to be the style which will have the greatest clarity. As for the Directors' Film, that is a more expensive type of production, and becomes necessary whenever the subject is spread over many times and places (as when treating of the history of a song) and when the individual characters of people in the film need to be made plain to the audience. There is only one really bad reason for making a Director's Film, and that is a desire to make a masterpiece. The desire to make a masterpiece has given rise to not a few obscure and complicated films on subjects which might well have been treated with simplicity and clarity by films of another type.

The three-way classification of films according to the way they are made, can be useful to Producers as well as to Reviewers. There are subjects which could be satisfactorily presented by any of the three methods, but in order to discuss which should be used in any particular case, it is essential to have adequate terminology. The three names given above to the three discerned species of Documentary may not be the best that can be thought of, but they are here sincerely offered to all Reviewers in the interests of precision of statement, and also to all those who have occasion to state their views at Production Conferences.

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CORRESPONDENCE

National Film Board of Canada

SIR,

I was happy to read John Grierson's come-uppance of your Board of Review for its undiscerning, snide, apparently jealous 'criticisms' of seven National Film Board of Canada productions. There was, as he suggests, little in the reviews that one would expect to see in a professional journal.

As regards *Bronco Busters* in particular, I saw it along with about 50 children, who would certainly not have bubbled with such delight at anything 'static'.

Incidentally, I have no axe to grind, since I left NFB three months ago, and did not help produce any of the films in question; and I may add that I have written a number of sincerely ecstatic reviews of British documentary films, than the best of which there are none finer.

Now, it's only fair to point out that Grierson's list of outstanding personnel at NFB is badly out of date. Only the first three on it have worked there within the past year or more, and one has for several years been in business as an able but inimical rival of NFB. I'm amazed that Grierson should have omitted mention of outstanding producers like Evelyn Spice Cherry (*Vegetable Insects*), Gudrun Bjerring Parker (*Listen to the Prairies*), Bob Anderson (*A Feeling of Rejection*), and Don Mulholland (*Accidents Don't Happen* and *File* 3615).

Yours sincerely,

PAUL A. GARDNER

272 Stewart St
Ottawa
Canada

SIR,

What induced you to include *English Diary* by Arndt von Rautenfeld in your February issue?

It contains no 'documentary news' about the making of *KRO Germany* 1947; no impression of the work of the Crown Film Unit group the author met in Scotland; only two or three remarks about film production in England, which is what the author came over to study, but no comparative analysis.

Instead, we have a propaganda article to enlist pity for our ex-enemies. Bomb devastations?—what a pity he could not have seen London in 1940-41 before we tidied it up some six or seven years ago. Food? Clothes? Does he realize that we, the victors of a war started by his people, have had to deprive ourselves to feed Germany, spending millions of dollars we need for reconstruction here at home? So we want peace, do we? And when have *we* wanted war?

Herr von Rautenfeld does a disservice to his country if he thinks articles like this—so reminiscent of the 'pity-the-poor-Germans' propaganda after the first World War—will do anything but make the British despise an ungrateful and incorrigible people.

Yours truly,

BETTY J. CRAWTER

612 Rodney House
Dolphin Square, SW1

We Want More Shorts

SIR,

Having been in the film industry over ten years, I have worked for many short-film companies.

I have always found a tendency to treat short-film subjects not as big pictures; I have found that, cinema audiences like shorts—if they are good but they must be good and have an appeal.

Recently I was with a short and documentary film company. I found that many of the films were treated very lightly and when we began to shoot we had a very rough script. As time went on the director saw some of the rather obvious faults of the picture, he began to despair; this sort of thing can be remedied: there should be more planning.

There is a nasty tendency in the industry to say—'He's a short-film director, he could not be much good.' This is entirely wrong. The short film is a stepping stone for features; many a good director today started on shorts and having achieved success, went over to features. The medium of features is different to a degree, one has to portray something on the screen for ten minutes—but it is nevertheless worthy of a good director. He must put the film over with the minimum amount of footage and waste.

Let us treat short films as features! Very often at the cinema I have heard someone in the audience say—'The feature was very poor but I loved the short film on boats.' I think a good short is quite as important as the main film, for it can balance the programme perfectly. I should like to see more films of interest; this would balance a programme where there is a big feature of 9,000 or 10,000 ft.

Some film 'fans' have told me they like going to such and such a cinema because they show Donald Duck; these cartoons run 7-8 mins, yet are treated as an important item of the programme.

Let us pay more attention to the supporting programme for these smaller subjects are the backbone of the show, a good short, well produced, will make up for a rather poor feature. Let us go all out on these pictures and give the film industry more work to do.

The answer is to produce good short pictures, then the exhibitor will pay more—let us cut out the tripe and make way for some decent smaller productions—it is up to the industry.

Yours faithfully,

G. MAX KEMP

The Priory
Knowle Green
Staines, Middx

Films in Agriculture

SIR,

The technician who attended the recent SFA conference on 'Films in Agriculture' writes tetchily of his impressions in your last issue. He might ponder the fact that the delegates—most of whom had travelled long distances to be present—were by their very number a tribute to the genuine interest in the uses of the film in agricultural education.

Conferences are normally the occasion for expressing divergent views. Why should agricultural films be an exception? And if your contributor found the prevailing atmosphere critical, he can rest assured that this was in no way due to bucolic bad temper but simply an indication to the film-maker that he was failing to satisfy the requirements of those who seek to make films do the job they claim to do. Disgruntled, these critics may have been, but they *are* the consumers, and most of their comments were constructive.

I suggest that there are still a great many difficult problems surrounding the successful use of films in adult education work, that they occur in an extreme form in rural audiences, and that up to the present, attempts to solve them have been exclusively of the hit and miss variety.

For example, we know very little about the ideal length of an agricultural instructional film; how long (*a*) farmers, (*b*) farm-workers, (*c*) young farmers' clubs can, generally speaking, continue to assimilate facts which are (*a*) within, (*b*) outside, their everyday experience.

Nor has much study been made of the psychology of rural audiences in relation to films. Were this done it might be found that they showed a far greater sympathy with the non-theatrical film programme than audiences in urban areas, where glamorous associations with the commercial cinema have to be overcome. On the other hand, it would probably disclose that the language of the film, being less familiar to rural audiences, called for a slower tempo and simpler construction than in work directed at the life-long cinema-goer in the towns. And many modern agricultural films *are* made by technicians reared in the structural conventions of the entertainment film.

Complaints about commentators' accents are, I grant, becoming tiresome. But this again is the expression of a problem which has received no experimental analysis with agricultural or other films. As Mr Edgar Anstey noted at the conference we now suspect that the voice which read the news yesterday, lacks conviction when extolling the benefits of artificial insemination today. But has anybody investigated the popularity of various commentators? Or attempted to assess the real degree of resentment felt by Northumbrians for Devonian voices? Or even compared the response to silent and sound films? (Quite the best instructional film shown at the conference—*Knot-tying in the Binder*, was silent.)

The answer to all these questions is no, and I suggest that until some data are available, criticisms of the kind which led to your contributor's outburst when he cried 'Nonsense!' will continue. Meanwhile I believe that expletives—however gentlemanly—from Soho are not merely unhelpful, but possibly damaging.

Yours faithfully,

MERVYN REEVES

The University
Manchester 13

HARRAP

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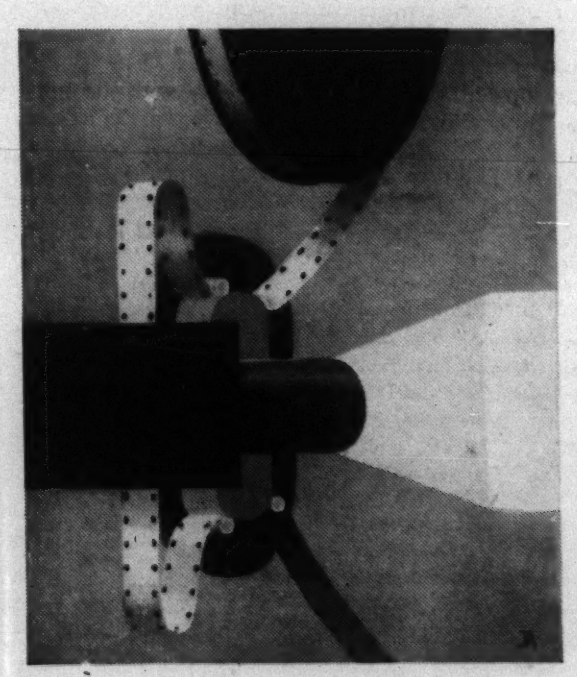

CINEMA

CREDIT for the actual invention of the cinematograph is difficult to apportion. It is certain that Englishmen played an important part. As long ago as 1860 Sir John Herschel published a theory of cinematography, and about 1889 a patent for a cinema camera and projector was applied for by W. Friese Greene and M. Evans. Today the cinema is our great relaxation. But how many of us who go to "the movies", who watch the latest performance of our particular "star", realise what the cinematograph industry owes to the workers in many branches of science and technology, and not least to the chemist? No other form of entertainment owes him so heavy a debt. Celluloid itself, the basis of the industry, is a chemical achievement. This must be transparent to give clear images after great magnification, resilient and tough to stand great strain. It must be so treated that the danger from fire is reduced to a minimum. The hand of the chemist is indeed traceable from the make-up of the actors to the lamps in the projectors. In the apparatus used for the sound-recording rare metals are needed: in the lenses of cameras and projectors, optical glass of the highest quality: in the colour-photography, pigments of the truest and most vivid colour. The sets for the ballrooms and palaces of the cinema's Cloudcuckoodom involve the use of large quantities of paints, quick-drying stucco and plasters: the costumes and draperies must be dyed. The tale is continued into the cinema theatre itself, in its decoration, its disinfection, its air-conditioning. When next you sit in your favourite cinema, think for a moment of the patient work in laboratory and factory that has enabled you to see the wonders of the world or the finest product of the cinematograph studio so clearly and still at so modest a price.

ICI

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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Important news came to hand after our other advertisement had been set up. The news is enough to justify a further advertisement.

Roberto Rossellini

whose 'Rome, Open City', 'Paisa' and 'Germany, Year Zero' (not yet shown), placed the Italian film in the front rank of major productions, has agreed to write a special article for our first book. The name is sufficient and his contribution will obviously be of first importance. It is with added confidence that we advise you to watch out for the first number of

"IMPACT ON FILM"

WHAT THEY THINK OF 'CHARLEY' CARTOONS

The critics

EVENING STANDARD

The new colour cartoons by John Halas and Joy Batchelor, which are designed to explain some present-day problems and their suggested solutions, succeed in being highly amusing and likeable as well. The need for town planning, the case for the new Health Act—these are tough subjects for entertainment. The fact that they *are* entertaining, while dispensing painless doses of understanding to people who would rather die than read a pamphlet, is the measure of their brilliance.

MANCHESTER GUARDIAN

A good deal of credit should be given to Mr Halas and Miss Batchelor for the facile manner in which they have reduced legislation to simple visual terms.

YORKSHIRE POST

They are vastly more entertaining and carry their message better than the dull diagram type of film that was much used formerly for Government propaganda.

SCOTSMAN

The COI have used the service of Mr John Halas and Miss Joy Batchelor as directors of the cartoons, and they have evolved a new technique for their work. Technicolor is used in preference to the more glaring hues of the normal cinema cartoon, and the action is smooth and placid compared to that found in the cartoon's American counterparts.

The public

It was the first British cartoon film I have seen and I was quite thrilled. It showed up the accompanying Disney alarmingly, and I noticed that the people sitting around me appreciated it.

Miss F. Brown, Greenock, Scotland.

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